

## **Lesson Plan: The Structure of Virginia Local Government**

This lesson focuses on “the basics,” i.e. the essential structure and characteristics of Virginia’s local government organization.

### **Connection to POS: Standards 8.1 and 8.2**

- ◆ *Students will identify fundamental principles of our democratic republic including ....federalism. (8.1.1.b)*
- ◆ *Students will explain the responsibilities of a citizen in the family, school, community, state, nation, and the world. (8.1.2.a)*

### **SOL Standards: 7.1.a, 7.2.a, 7.2.d, 7.4.c**

### **SOL Review Opportunities: *House of Burgesses, political machines, urbanization***



### **Objectives**

At the end of this lesson students will be able to:

- ◆ explain the origins of Virginia’s unique local government organization.
- ◆ define numerous terms essential to understanding local government.
- ◆ evaluate the impact of Dillon’s Rule on local government in Virginia.



### **Materials**

- ◆ Student Handout – Local Government in Virginia and corresponding worksheet/quiz
- ◆ Abridged copies of *Dillon’s Rule* from Virginia Town & City, August, 1989 edition
- ◆ Questions to guide reading of *Dillon’s Rule*
- ◆ *Closest to the People* glossary
- ◆ Blank graphic organizer comparing city/town/county structure in Virginia



### **Time Needed**

- ◆ Two 45 minute periods + homework



### **Procedures**

1. Begin by distributing copies of Student Handout Local Government in Virginia. Have students highlight the following terms in the reading and then use the glossary to familiarize themselves with the definitions: **annexation, board of supervisors, council-manager plan, Dillon's Rule.**
2. Survey the class to see what they already know about government in their state and county. You may wish to have a class member record responses on butcher paper or posterboard for later review/correction. Read *Local Government in Virginia* as a class. Allow time for discussion of terms.
3. Working in cooperative groups, have students complete the graphic organizer comparing the structure and function of city, town, and county governments as described in the article.
4. When students have completed their graphic organizers, distribute copies of the quiz/worksheet: *Local Government in Virginia*. Allow students to use their graphic organizers in completing the worksheet. Correct the worksheet and fill in any gaps that may remain on students' graphic organizers.
5. Preview the article on Dillon's Rule, highlighting any new or unfamiliar vocabulary. Explain to students that Judge Dillon lived during an era of corrupt local government that was run by political machines. Assign reading for homework. Students should be instructed to pick three points either in defense of or against the use of Dillon's Rule in local government, focusing on such questions as:
6. What was the condition of city government at the time the Rule was written?
  - Did the Rule help to solve these problems?
  - Is the rule still necessary today?
  - What are positives/negatives of the Rule in modern local government?
  - What, if any, modifications could be made to the rule to make it more applicable in today's society?

Responses to these questions should be recorded on an index card to be used for a debate the following day.

7. Upon returning to class the following day, review the reading assignment to ensure that each student was able to grasp the most important points of Dillon's rule. In their cooperative groups, students should work together to come up with a one sentence summary of the Rule and indicate why city government was such a problem during Dillon's era.

8. Students will then be organized for a debate on the merits and usefulness of Dillon's Rule.
9. Thought should be given to the time period in which it was created as well as its current usefulness.
10. Students should complete an entry in their journal/notebook reflecting on the debate.



### **Assessment**

- ◆ Quiz/worksheet on local government
- ◆ Observation/anecdotal records kept during debate
- ◆ Journal response/reflection on class debate



### **Extensions**

- ◆ Assign students to do independent research in which they compare the structure of Virginia's local governments to the structure of a bordering state or a state in which they have previously lived. They could present their findings in a PowerPoint presentation or by creating a tri-fold brochure on the two localities.



### **Differentiations**

- ◆ Provide a list of questions to guide student reading of Dillon's Rule to ensure that they are able to comprehend its main points.
- ◆ Allow students to work in pairs to develop arguments for or against the use of Dillon's rule in local government concerns. They can practice their arguments together and help solidify their partner's thinking on the topic.



### **Interdisciplinary Connections**

- ◆ Enlist the help of your English teacher in reading excerpts from Lincoln Steffens' muckraking novel, *Shame of the Cities*. Discuss city life at the time the novel was written and how the Progressive movement grew in response to the corruption and abuses prevalent in the cities during that era.